

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for audibly informing a recipient of an arrival of a digital communication from a sender, the method comprising:
  - receiving a digital communication from a sender directed to a recipient;
  - determining whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier that identifies the sender of the digital communication and that is designated by the sender of the digital communication; and
  - conditioning perception by the recipient of the audio identifier on whether the digital communication is determined to be associated with the audio identifier, the audio identifier being perceived prior to or concurrent with perception of the digital communication by the recipient.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the digital communication is an instant message.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the digital communication is an e-mail.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the digital communication is a voice mail.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the audio identifier is a spoken version of a user identifier of the sender.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier comprises determining whether an audio identifier has been received from the sender.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein determining whether an audio identifier has been received from the sender includes determining whether the audio identifier has been received with the digital communication.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier comprises accessing a data store based on a user identifier of the sender.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the user identifier of the sender is included in the digital communication.
10. The method of claim 8, wherein the user identifier is an e-mail address, an instant messaging handle, or a screen name.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein recipient perception of the audio identifier also is conditioned on whether communication exchange preferences associated with the recipient allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein the recipient is allowed to perceive the audio identifier when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is allowed to perceive the audio identifier.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.
14. The method of claim 11, wherein the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier.
15. The method of claim 14, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.
16. The method of claim 11, wherein the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier or the digital communication when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier or the digital communication.
17. The method of claim 16, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.

18. The method of claim 1, further comprising enabling the recipient to perceive a user interface and allowing the recipient to perceive the audio identifier if the recipient selects a user interface element that corresponds to authorization of the audio identifier.
19. The method of claim 1, wherein recipient perception of the audio identifier also is conditioned on whether the recipient is available to receive the digital communication.
20. The method of claim 19, further comprising discarding the digital communication if the recipient is not available to receive the digital communication.
21. The method of claim 19, further comprising depositing the digital communication in a data store for later retrieval by the recipient conditioned on whether the recipient is not available to receive the digital communication.
22. The method of claim 1, further comprising enabling the recipient to perceive a sender profile.
23. The method of claim 1, wherein the sender comprises a caller and the digital communication comprises a phone call and wherein:
  - receiving a digital communication comprises receiving the phone call directed to the recipient;
  - determining whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier comprises determining whether the phone call is associated with an audio identifier that identifies the caller and that is designated by the caller; and
  - conditioning perception of the audio identifier comprises conditioning perception of the audio identifier on whether the phone call is determined to be associated with the audio identifier, the audio identifier being perceived as a ring tone for the phone call.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein enabling the recipient to perceive the audio identifier comprises playing the audio identifier multiple times in repetition to serve as a ring tone for the phone call.
25. A user interface for enabling a recipient of a digital communication from a sender to authorize or reject a source audio identifier, the user interface comprising:
  - a first interface element structured and arranged to provide notification of a digital communication that has been received;
  - a second interface element structured and arranged to provide notification of an audio identifier that identifies the sender of the digital communication and that is designated by the sender of the digital communication; and
  - a third interface element structured and arranged to enable the recipient of the digital communication to authorize or reject presentation of the audio identifier in advance of audio identifier presentation.
26. The user interface of claim 25, wherein the first interface element displays sender profile information.
27. The user interface of claim 25, wherein the third interface element is additionally structured and arranged to enable the recipient of the digital communication to authorize or reject presentation of the digital communication.
28. The user interface of claim 25, wherein the third interface element includes a set of fourth interface elements selectable by the recipient to effect authorization or rejection of the audio identifier presentation.
29. The user interface of claim 28, wherein the set of fourth interface elements include an interface element selectable to authorize presentation of the digital communication and the audio identifier.

30. The user interface of claim 28, wherein the set of fourth interface elements include an interface element selectable to authorize presentation of the digital communication but to reject presentation of the audio identifier.
31. The user interface of claim 28, wherein the set of fourth interface elements include an interface element selectable to authorize presentation of the digital communication and to authorize presentation of an audio identifier for the sender that reveals the sender identity but that obscures the sender designated audio identifier.
32. The user interface of claim 28, wherein the set of fourth interface elements include an interface element selectable to deposit the digital communication in a data store for later retrieval by the recipient.
33. The user interface of claim 25, further comprising a fourth interface element selectable to authorize or reject presentation of the audio identifier upon receipt of each future digital communication from the sender.
34. The user interface of claim 25, further comprising a fourth interface element selectable to authorize or reject presentation of the audio identifier upon receipt of each future digital communication from the sender conditioned on whether the audio identifier is subsequently changed by the recipient.
35. The user interface of claim 34, wherein the digital communication is a phone call and the sender is a caller and wherein:
  - the first interface element is structured and arranged to provide notification of a phone call from a caller;
  - the second interface element is structured and arranged to provide notification of an audio identifier that identifies the caller and that is designated by the caller; and
  - the third interface element is structured and arranged to enable the recipient of the phone call to authorize or reject presentation of the audio identifier in advance of audio identifier presentation.

36. A computer system for audibly informing a recipient of an arrival of a digital communication from a sender, the computer system comprising:
- a data store configured to store audio identifiers;
  - a digital communication processor configured to
    - receive a digital communication from a sender directed to a recipient,
    - determine whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier that identifies the sender of the digital communication and that is designated by the sender of the digital communication;
    - access the audio identifier from the data store and condition perception by the recipient of the audio identifier on whether the digital communication is determined to be associated with the audio identifier, the audio identifier being perceived prior to or concurrent with perception of the digital communication by the recipient.
37. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication is an instant message.
38. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication is an e-mail.
39. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication is a voice mail.
40. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the audio identifier is a spoken version of a user identifier of the sender.
41. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to determine whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier by determining whether an audio identifier has been received from the sender.
42. The computer system of claim 41, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to determine whether an audio identifier has been received from the sender by

determining whether the audio identifier has been received with the digital communication.

43. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to determine whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier by accessing a data store based on a user identifier of the sender.
44. The computer system of claim 43, wherein the user identifier of the sender is included in the digital communication.
45. The computer system of claim 43, wherein the user identifier is an e-mail address, an instant messaging handle, or a screen name.
46. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor also conditions recipient perception of the audio identifier on whether communication exchange preferences associated with the recipient allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier.
47. The computer system of claim 46, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is allowed to perceive the audio identifier.
48. The computer system of claim 47, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.
49. The computer system of claim 46, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to not allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier.

50. The computer system of claim 49, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.
51. The computer system of claim 46, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to not allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier or the digital communication when the communication exchange preferences explicitly include a setting indicating that the recipient is not allowed to perceive the audio identifier or the digital communication.
52. The computer system of claim 51, wherein the setting is set by the recipient in response to a query.
53. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor is further configured to enable the recipient to perceive a user interface and allow the recipient to perceive the audio identifier if the recipient selects a user interface element that corresponds to authorization of the audio identifier.
54. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor is also configured to condition recipient perception of the audio identifier on whether the recipient is available to receive the digital communication.
55. The computer system of claim 54, wherein the digital communication processor is further configured to discard the digital communication if the recipient is not available to receive the digital communication.
56. The computer system of claim 54, wherein the digital communication processor is further configured to deposit the digital communication in a data store for later retrieval by the recipient conditioned on whether the recipient is not available to receive the digital communication.



57. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the digital communication processor is further configured to enable the recipient to perceive a sender profile.
58. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the sender comprises a caller and the digital communication comprises a phone call and wherein the digital communication processor is configured to:
- receive a digital communication by receiving the phone call directed to the recipient;
  - determine whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier by determining whether the phone call is associated with an audio identifier that identifies the caller and that is designated by the caller; and
  - condition perception of the audio identifier by conditioning perception of the audio identifier on whether the phone call is determined to be associated with the audio identifier, the audio identifier being perceived as a ring tone for the phone call.
59. The computer system of claim 58, wherein the digital communication processor is configured to enable the recipient to perceive the audio identifier by playing the audio identifier multiple times in repetition to serve as a ring tone for the phone call.
60. An apparatus for audibly informing a recipient of an arrival of a digital communication from a sender, the apparatus comprising:
- means for receiving a digital communication from a sender directed to a recipient;
  - means for determining whether the digital communication is associated with an audio identifier that identifies the sender of the digital communication and that is designated by the sender of the digital communication; and
  - means for conditioning perception by the recipient of the audio identifier on whether the digital communication is determined to be associated with the audio identifier, the audio identifier being perceived prior to or concurrent with perception of the digital communication by the recipient.

61. A method for informing a recipient of an arrival of a digital communication from a sender, the method comprising:
- receiving a digital communication from a sender directed to a recipient;
  - determining whether the digital communication is associated with an identifier that identifies the sender of the digital communication and that is designated by the sender of the digital communication; and
  - conditioning perception by the recipient of the identifier on whether the digital communication is determined to be associated with the identifier, the identifier being perceived prior to or concurrent with perception of the digital communication by the recipient.
62. The method of claim 61, wherein the identifier is a video image designated by the sender.
63. The method of claim 61, wherein the identifier is an audiovisual presentation designated by the sender.